



Decentralisation in South East Europe: objectives, instruments, practices

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1. Centralism and decentralisation: power-struggle and other considerations

Cultural policy centralism is an end in itself intimately connected with building of nation-states. It is in the core of the idea of national culture to establish a permanent institutional protection by the state (Gellner, 1986¹). No other arrangements, including liberal market and civil society organisations, are believed to take care of public culture (Miller, 1995). This policy, exercised in the national capitals, made for a centripetal political and cultural landscape crystallised in a representative order of institutions. It is marked with a clear boundary towards internal periphery, neighbouring nations and non-cultural sectors. Meanings and functions of culture are captured by power and prestige exercise. Hence the function of representation stays in the foreground. The questions “who” (is) presented and “where”, accompanied with the idea of big number (large spending, audience, international reputations, etc.), is of primary importance. The centre glows from inside, providing the impression of national cohesion, and occasionally outside, namely there where former imperial power made its international glory. This radiation detracts other meanings and functions of culture, i.e., non-hierarchical, transboundary and bottom-up interests in culture. Also, it makes decentralisation being a descending order or an issue of power-struggle between centre and periphery.

And indeed, policy decentralisation often turns out that way, to be the arena of the power-struggle. Regionalism and autonomy become more sensitive an issue and pressure towards decentralisation being stronger, when combined with demands for linguistic, ethnic or religious autonomy (cf. Rokkan, Urwin, 1983). However, cultural policy polycentrism must not be motivated by the politics of identity only (as, for example, in Belgium), but merely by the fact that regions traditionally are bearers of cultural and other competencies (e.g., Austria, Germany). Nevertheless, one cannot discern a new quality of objectives, instruments and

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¹ “A culture..., when devoid of a political shell, ... will then inevitably strive to bring such a state into being, and to redraw political boundaries so as to ensure that a state does exist, which alone can protect the educational and cultural infrastructure without which a modern, literate culture cannot survive. No culture is now without its national theatre, national museum and national sovereignty; and these in turn will not be safe until there is an independent Ministry of the Interior to protect them”. (Gellner, 1986: 17).

practices of such cultural policy. It did not bring a different model of cultural meanings, production, financing, education, popularisation, relationships with other sectors, and other cultural functions.

Differences between decentralised or polycentric systems, on the one hand, and centralised systems, on the other, are formal rather than substantial. Decentralisation mostly expands the existing model of culture or even consolidates the central governance in culture by devolving a portion of central competencies, that are considered less important, to local levels. For example, the Nordic countries welfare system, including long term policy planning and development, has been maintained in 1990s, amid increasing importance given to major cities as financiers and facility providers for artists. Likewise, decentralisation in France has generated a centralist backlash under pretext that former was lacking in Paris standards of efficiency and excellence. In England, the lack of legislation has undermined regional and local autonomy (Heiskanen, 2002). However, even in the cases where decentralisation and autonomy are supported by legislation, counter-tendencies of “structural centralism” take over the old hierarchy of cultural policy system, mainly through arm’s length and similar bodies or through new technocratic doctrine of Network Society^{1a}. Such a way, “truly democratic modes of bottom-up decentralisation” are obstructed (Heiskanen, 2002: 26). Nevertheless, this is not the only impediment. What is also missing on the way to a broader participation in culture is “another end”, some other objective, of decentralisation process, in terms of different meanings and functions of culture. Admittedly, these aspects of culture are not needed to be “re/invented”, for they are known to researchers in culture as well as to artists, i.e., all those who search for or experiment with aspects of culture beyond its representational, i.e., “metropolitan” or “monumentalist”, significance, culture as a way of living and arts as a way of creation for such living that primarily enable people to understand and communicate with others. It is needed, then, to employ such cultural knowledge and sense in the process of cultural policy decentralisation. The result of that might be a working concept of culture that really “decentralises” the old cultural meanings and functions, ceasing with exclusive links between culture and political power, culture and administration, culture and expert power, and, eventually, culture and business that is interested only in converting cultural goods into commercial markets (mass culture) by fostering the populist notion of the “sovereignty of consumption” (McGuigan, 1997), with no public standards for culture in the sight. Notably, such a business makes for its own agenda in the policy decentralisation, exercising a pressure on the state controlled culture to maximally relax its requests on public cultural standards, whereby the targets of this strategy are regional or local units reluctant or disinterested in preserving the standards of cultural heritage and living culture or in investing into new cultural projects.

In the countries of South East Europe, the issue of cultural policy decentralisation is perplexed with such dilemmas. In some countries of the former Yugoslavia strong demands for regional autonomy or federalisation exist, including cultural autonomy as the “first echelon” of political autonomy, namely there where is a strong politics of ethnic identity (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, partly in Croatia). In other cases, no such strong demands for

^{1a} This doctrine asserts primacy of new information technology and specialists in constituting the whole array of knowledge needed for new development, from industries to banking and media (Castells, 1997), but also in arts (“aesthetic techno-fetishism” – Fernandez, 1999). Heiskanen in the cited work (Heiskanen, 2002) speaks about the “new managerial doctrine of Information Age”, which is essentially the same, although it may also assume, as we understand, the imperative of “lean production” and similar concerns putting culture exclusively into financial cost-and-benefit requirements. Anyway, in the context of policy decentralisation this doctrine provides a pretext for taking away the competence in cultural decision making from broader and popular forums into restricted and more exclusive circles of decision-makers, which represents the case of “structural centralism”.

cultural decentralisation seem to exist (Slovenia, Albania, Rumania and Bulgaria – see section 4). At the same time, state in association with professional organisations is the only guardian of public cultural goods. The cost of this arrangement is that it perpetuates traditional meanings and functions of culture, mainly associated with national cohesion, identity and distinctiveness. This arrangement of meanings and functions is inappropriate to respond to economic developmental challenges and to political challenges, whether domestic or international. Culture serves – as much as the cultural mainstream is concerned – as symbolic reservoir for ethno-national mobilisation and other reactive tendencies, rather than to create responses that facilitate the solutions to developmental problems and stimulate proactive tendencies. Thus, did power struggles over culture make her unable to release her creative energies?

In this paper we will plead for another understanding of possible objective(s) of cultural policy decentralisation, beyond the agenda of concentration of different power systems (political parties, meritocratic and business). We understand that a true democratic culture, presumably the outcome of throughout process of decentralisation, cannot be defined in the terms of imperialistic *Kulturkampf*, metropolitanism or nationalism. Internationally, these terms favour cultural capitals and areas or institutions that have accumulated their splendour, wealth, power and mass attractiveness (in investments, in trade and in tourist industry) due to advantages achieved in a pre-democratic past marked with asymmetric international relations generated by former imperial-colonial systems. Even the capitals and cultural centres of the new democracies, such as in SEE, cannot be compared and nor they can compete with magnitudes and attractiveness of the old cultural centres in Europe (e.g., Rome, Paris, London, Vienna or Amsterdam) in cultural tourism markets, due to their historical heritage and prestige, or in (classical) cultural industries. The new democracies may, hopefully, develop meanings and functions of culture, esp. living culture enmeshed into a tissue of everyday life and communication, which makes a new quality that might be appealing to people, both domestic and international, where people, including tourist and partners, feel welcome, more enthusiastic and attached and feel invited to join and choose among a palette of local cultural, economic or social initiatives, activities or projects. In general, a truly post-imperial, post-colonial and post-national culture gives a way to new modes of expression of creativity, identity, tolerance, work, co-operation, interdependence and solidarity, which old (metropolitan) cultures have suppressed or dismantled in favour of hierarchies, centrality, supremacy, exclusion, frictions, cleansing or even extermination of the others... .

We also understand that, for to develop new forms of culture without old pre-emption, fears or discontents, a vision of such a culture must be set out beforehand in national and local strategic goals of cultural development, as well as of civil society organisations, for to be validated as “another end” of decentralisation policy. Otherwise, it is not strange that new democracies in SEE countries exhibit certain disbelief in decentralisation, for it looks to them as an instrument that turns culture back to pre-national (centrifugal) past, or a channel through which the public culture disappears into the black hole of global trade and market in which, nevertheless, the old democracies and their cultures, unlike new democracies and their cultures, still gain more than they lose.

2. Objectives of decentralisation policy: a three-dimensional approach

The conceptual framework provided here in order to identify (hidden or declared) objectives of decentralisation is three-dimensional. It serves to preparing of a methodological framework

for research of cultural policies of decentralisation in SEE countries and, in a way, to encourage such policies as well.

- a) Decentralisation leading to reduction of central competencies in cultural policy, whereby local cultural administration, cultural institutions and activities remain uncertain with regard to their competence and further financing or being left to unpredictable outcomes of local policies and budgets or competitive markets, e.g., privatisation. The objective of this policy may be called “Titanic”, i.e., only an exclusive set of privileged national institutions enjoy security and permanency of protection of the state, while other institutions, associations or groups are left to their own. Admittedly, this goal of decentralisation process is more anticipated or ascribed by the critics of decentralisation policy in different East-European than it is overtly advocated by official policies. Nevertheless, this outcome may be a latent consequence of all decentralisation policies which recur to intuitive – and old-fashioned, indeed – understanding of what has remained in culture that is worth to be patronised by state thus far in the terms of “national interest in culture”.
- b) Decentralisation leading to a “fair-chaire” between state protected culture, local levels of government and laissez-faire environment in private economy. This arrangement may take different proportions. For example, some state financed institutions are requested to cover at least 10% of their budgets from other, non-governmental sources, while the others may be requested for to cover their expenses from other sources up to 80%. Essentially, the functions of culture in both cases do not change, for both are interested to attract more financiers and more audiences on nearly same or similar programmes and activities (e.g., theatre performances, book publishing, concerts, exhibitions, multimedia presentations, international exchange, joint projects, etc.). This objective may be called “balancing burdens” (of the old cultural functions). Perhaps, a pressure put on art and cultural institutions in the public sphere in Britain, pushing in favour of their efficiency and expenditures, which includes commercial streamlining of theatre repertoires and similar classic forms of art performances, may be taken as an example of such balancing. Nevertheless, this “hybridisation” turns out to be an assimilation of the old public culture into commercial environment, such as soap-opera production, rather than other way around. Also, a more entertaining form of art & cultural production does not seem to move broader public out of massively privatised and basically home-centred cultural life created by television and heavily supported by the new information technologies. The public space (of place), especially in provinces, is deserted or filled with occasional walkers or the clusters of immigrants gathering in street corners or inns, otherwise the space being occupied with traffic jams, business hurries and shopping customers in workdays, i.e., from Monday through Saturday morning.
- c) This dimension is hypothetical or it can be observed only in weak traces there were attempt are made at making the public spaces attractive to people interested to meet artists, but also many other, yet unknown, people as well. It means that decentralisation leads to creation of two forms of culture and their functions. The old one is consolidated under auspices of state and the old policy of centralism. The other, new emerging form of culture, which retain in main the status of public culture and enjoy the public financing, both local and central as well as domestic and international NGOs. This form of public culture is requested to develop projects, programmes and activities of sustainable cultural development that may penetrate the other sectors, e.g., economy and industry, including companies, also education, science, health, tourism, protection of natural environment and

other sectors where culture may produce a significant added value. For example, in the economic growth by expanding quantity and quality of services, including designs of industrial products; enhancing aesthetic components of work and increasing work satisfaction; making education more playful and imaginative; making “dry” concepts of science closer to visual, tactile and lively experiences; expanding the role of arts in different therapeutics; “welcoming host”-programmes in tourism; marking boundaries between artificial and natural environments with artistic creations; etc. The objective of this policy of decentralisation may be called “the new public culture”. However, the recreation of social gathering, meeting and communication in the public spaces via arts, popular form of education and scientific discussions might be the main target of this policy. Just to remind that there are so much public buildings, including networks of houses of culture, that have remained from the era of socialism, that may used and revitalised to this purpose. In this paper this objective will be deduced from a general strategic goal described as culturally sustainable development.

On the basis of this framework the following might be hypothesised:

- From the onset of the process of decentralisation and up to a certain threshold, centralised system of cultural policy and cultural functions that it develops does not basically change due to decentralisation process. Instead, the old system becomes more flexible and more diversified and is even able to reproduce itself in its former versions. By the same token, a regionalised or federalised cultural systems must not produce essentially different cultural functions and outputs. It consists, on the contrary, of several hierarchical or centralised systems that replicate the features of centralised systems (moving along a/ or b/ dimension)
- By furthering on the process of decentralisation beyond certain threshold, it may lead either closer to the end represented by policy of liberalisation (dimension b/), or to the end represented by new public culture (dimension c/). In fact, the latter is hypothetical and not experienced enough. In all known cultural policy systems decentralisation process is not bifurcated in these terms. It is rather a balance between state managed and liberal policy that is established, whereby elite, alternative, industrial, commercial, educational and other functions of culture are differently allocated within governmental and non-governmental sectors. Yet, we may hypothesise that only in certain steps on the scale (see section 7/), decentralisation may lead to new public culture. Our explanation of this is that further unfolding of decentralisation, which expands the amounts of privatisation cum commercialisation of (formerly public) cultural goods, whether institutions or activities, is likely to perpetuate a culture and a cultural policy system in the terms of dimension a) or dimension b). In other words, interest in the new public culture or bottom-up, democratised participation in culture significantly weakens in this case and can much more hardly be recovered or redirected by public institutions or policies.
- The essential difference between central and polycentric, on the one hand, and entirely democratised or a-centric systems, on the other, is substantial and formal, rather than only formal or procedural. It means that a-centric forms of public culture pertain different meanings and roles of culture with regard to other spheres of community life, such attracting more and more people to participate in cultural life and cultural policy making.² In central or polycentric systems, which foster oligarchic or meritocratic, i.e., exclusive, forms of cultural policy and cultural practice, broader forms of people participation in culture is an illusion. Others, namely, who do not belong to such a space of culture and

² In the final section of this paper we will exemplify what we mean by strategic redefining of the meaning of culture as a goal of development, as it is formulated in the case of the Croatian Strategy of Cultural Development that has been adopted in the national parliament in 2001.

policy, remain eternally recipients, a passive public, and clients, or are simply irrelevant and outsiders.

3. The purpose of the methodological framework

The purpose of the methodological framework for research of the process of policy decentralisation in SEE countries is threefold:

- a) Mapping the actual processes of cultural decentralisation in SEE countries (here done only briefly – see the next section).
- b) Preparing a framework for comparative analysis of the objectives, instruments and practices of decentralisation in culture and cultural policy. This may be of an interest to cultural policy researchers and to cultural policy makers in SEE countries in order to develop knowledge and awareness as to which steps towards decentralisation are likely to produce the effects that contribute to existing goals of cultural policy or to their redefinition and redesigning. In fact, this depends on whether or how long-term or strategic goals of cultural policies are defined in particular countries (see the last section).
- c) To follow the basic postulate of *Policies for Culture*, which is that any major step forward in policy thinking and policy making, and which is aimed to transcend the old statist or laissez-faire model or their balancing (the latter is not said to be bad or unintended as a policy objective, but in the new democracies, for the reasons explained in above, it is hardly sustainable) – should be a result of co-ordinated efforts of the triangle of actors in parliamentary, administrative and third sector domains. This may lead to a redefinition of culture and cultural policy goals suitable to developing a broader, bottom-up interests in public culture and policy participation.

4. Mapping the process decentralisation in SEE countries: objectives, instruments, practices

Let us envisage now how policy decentralisation unfolds in the SEE countries. Unfortunately, many aspects of this process are unknown to us. However, it seems unlikely that reliable answers to the questions that follow may be found in the official documents, as much as we are unaware of analytical research in this field. Thus, which instruments are used in the case that a policy of decentralisation is more ambitiously procured and what actual practices tell about the implementation of such instruments? Where the process of decentralisation is eventually aiming to? Is it explained as a part of a long-term process the end of which is figured out by strategic objectives or goals, or is it just short termed, contingent and not clearly oriented process toward a policy end?

A newly compiled table³ that compares cultural policies of 29 countries, includes an overview of the features of cultural policy systems in terms of centralisation/decentralisation, from where features of some of SEE countries are taken. (Features of the cultural policy system of FR Macedonia are added and are based on our own expertise in this case).

³ Table is taken from unofficial and unpublished draft of the Compendium of Cultural Policies 2003 (ERICarts and Council of Europe).

Albania – “Centralised structure moving towards decentralisation”. No arm's length bodies.
Questions: What objectives, instruments or types of decentralisation are (going to be) devised? Whether or not arm's length bodies are taken as an important instrument of decentralisation and why?

Bosnia and Herzegovina - not known (presumably, cultural policy is staked in between political demands of three national parties that have not reached yet an agreement about the federal principles of this country).

Bulgaria – “Centralised structure moving towards decentralisation”. Arm's length bodies exist. Questions: What objectives, instruments or types of decentralisation are (going to be) devised? Whether or not arm's length bodies are taken as an important instrument of decentralisation and why?

Croatia - “Centralised structure”. Municipality plays an important role. New model of decentralisation is prepared in co-operation between Ministry and Open Society Institute (probably like in other SEE countries who declared their moving towards decentralisation). In this case, however, the implementation of the model is prolonged for an unpredictable period of time. Arm's length bodies exist.

Questions: What objectives, instruments or types of decentralisation are (going to be) devised? For arm's length bodies are taken as an important instrument of decentralisation in this case, whether or how tendencies toward “structural centralism” are to be avoided? This question is relevant to similar cases in other SEE countries. Finally, what are the reasons that the implementation of the decentralisation model is postponed or even cancelled – fiscal (e.g., to weak economic strength and too small provisions for culture in some regions), and/or political & ideological (e.g., centrifugal fear of the new regionalism or of giving more local power to opposition parties, etc.)? This question is also relevant to comparatively similar cases.

Macedonia - Centralised system. Moving toward decentralisation was announced several years ago, but it seems to be cancelled or rather substituted with the idea of bicultural cultural policy system (ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian), both centralised. Otherwise it has been explained that the country has no tradition of regions, and that only some cities may perhaps play a role of cultural centres beside Skopje. No arm's length bodies.

Questions: Whether the issues of decentralisation will be put on the agenda by the new government (elected in 2002)? Whether it wants to introduce arm's length bodies instead of the council of experts within the Ministry? Does the new government or the new Ministry of Culture also consider decentralisation policy inappropriate because of the imminence of creation of an ethnically based dualistic system of cultural policy, whereby both being centralised and hierarchical?

Romania – “Centralised system”. Moving toward decentralisation? No arm's length bodies.
Questions: If there is no move toward decentralisation at all, how is this policy generally explained? Why some possibly better qualities of decentralisation are not anticipated or are they ignored as such? If so, can the centralised system change in itself, within its own institutional prerequisites and its own ideology, and such perform some new qualities that were unknown in its history and which ones?

Slovenia – “Centralised system, municipalities play an important role”. Arm's length bodies exist. The country is soon to become the member of EU and such represents a clear example

of the fact that decentralisation must not be a prerequisite of culture or cultural policy success, nor a precondition for to be accepted by the old European democracies. It is the other objectives, instruments and practices of cultural policy, primarily the ones fostering the respect of freedom of expression and independent media and providing of legislation protecting copyright.

Questions: What are strategic goals of the Slovenian cultural policy and in what measure are they connected with or explained by centralised system? Are these goals or some of them achieved already? If there were/are pressures towards decentralisation, where did they come from, from the top or from bellow (e.g., Istria?), and why they did not succeed to? Can it be assumed, on the basis of Slovenian experience, that economic and (international) political success makes culture or cultural policy irrelevant or low priority among other policies, including the question cultural centralism vs. decentralisation? On the other hand, is it that economic crisis and political failure make culture a primary resource of importance, whether positive (hope for a different vision of future) or negative (back to the origins, firm politics of identity, intolerance or resurrection of the old ethnic prejudices and antagonisms)?

FR Yugoslavia – not known (presumably, the issue of decentralisation is overshadowed by the actual political process with regard to the official status and interrelations of Serbia and Montenegro, as constitutive units of (con)federation, and Vojvodina (the autonomous province of Serbia) and Kosovo (autonomy has an international status, but highly contested both by Kosovo Albanians and by actual Yugoslav state). However, in Serbia new initiatives are taking up and are aimed at revitalising and further developing cultural life and policy strategies on the level several cities and municipalities, which is strongly supported by the actual Ministry of Culture. How far these initiatives have gone? Are they still confined within discussion among experts or between them and some policy-makers or a step forward is made in the meantime in terms of preparing a new policy framework?

5. Some general remarks to descriptions of central/decentralised systems

It is not only that these short descriptions, but also more extensive ones that depict the formal system of policy competencies and decision-making, are often incomplete, as they conceal internal problems in implementing the existing system, such as legislative provisions, which means practices. Practices are real outcomes or outlooks of the existing policies. They, however, must not coincide with official or legislative frameworks of such policies. Also, the types of decentralisation policy, e.g., cultural, fiscal or financial and political (cf. Kawashima, 1997), which may be taken as policy instruments as well, are not clearly defined. For example, whether a variety of different tax or budget-outlays percentages, from smaller to larger, given for culture on local levels, reflect corresponding, i.e., bigger and smaller, cultural activities and, moreover, different cultural visibility of local communities.

Above all, the objectives of decentralisation policies are sometimes obscured, although they are often officially defined in the terms of enhancing efficiency or subsidiarity of cultural institutions and production. Decentralisation is often introduced by pretext of streamlining the national expenditures for some local cultural institutions and activities that were fully financed in the former socialist system. This way, a circle of protected institutions of national significance is consolidated and financially secured, while other institutions are or will soon be left to fortunes and whims of local authorities or to competitive market environment. The question is whether this way some important cultural institutions or activities are switched off without appropriate explanation or can they be considered merely as losers in a power

struggle? What independent experts and what people employed in such institutions say? Do their explanations differ from the official explanations?

There are many more questions that may be asked, indeed, and some of them and more specific will be formulated in the next section. However, it is generally difficult to justify the policy of centralism or decentralisation, when the case of former socialist countries is concerned, such as SEE countries in particular. Firstly, alike the old cultural policy suited to the former system, new cultural policy reflects values of the new social and political order. However, what are these values exactly, beside national uniqueness and cohesion (for internationalism is officially abandoned)? Individualism, collectivism or both (for social, political and organisational cultures in the East, as much as in the West, are really different /cf. Hofstede, 1994/)?

Secondly, if diversity or multiculturalism, identity, creativity and participation are such new values – just to list the principles of CoE which cultural policies in as many countries are keen to reflect – which of these values may precisely be achieved via decentralisation, and why not through centralism? Even participation must not necessarily be more expedient through decentralisation.^{3a} Again, a clear definition of the objective(s) of decentralisation seems to be lacking along with instruments that may operate such objective(s) in order to be achieved in a predictable period of time.

Thirdly, maintaining a status quo, making the cultural policy system neither completely centralised nor decentralised to a certain degree, cannot prevent further erosion of cultural functions in post-Communist societies. Also, imitating or taking advice from western neighbours or other western countries that have achieved a good balance between central, regional and local competencies, and between state, private and non-governmental not-for-profit sectors in culture, must not produce the same results as in transitional countries, nor it really does. Reasons are many and cannot be discussed here.

In sum, it seems that role of culture and cultural policy in the periods of profound changes, as it is the actual one, may again be precious, provided that it does not replicate the culture of nationalism or imperialism, i.e., the reactive tendencies, and that decentralisation of culture may clearly be the means for creating a concept and practice of culture and cultural policy that enable the SEE countries to live, co-operate and integrate into a European world where cultures are not anymore the appendices of power, supremacy or conflict strategies, but are privileged ways to communicate and work out the best qualities of nations, communities and individuals on the basis of equality, thrust, freedom, creativity and solidarity. May such a vision be incorporated into the agenda of decentralisation?

To be sure, no new arrangements in cultural policy, including decentralisation of any type, can re-compensate for job permanency, routine and certainty of the planned inefficiency of the former Communist system. Nevertheless, nothing is more hopeless, insensitive and incompetent to newcomers or new candidates seeking the employment in cultural administration and institutions, and nothing is less intelligent and hypocritical, than maintaining the system of impossible dualism in cultural policy, the one which secures permanent positions, jobs and finances for a minority consisting of state employees and

^{3a} We remember the reactions of some local cultural administrators in Croatia in the beginning of 2001, when new policy of decentralisation was announced, that they expressed their fears that re-centering of the policy in regional or county offices will make a sort of “new dictatorship that may be much worse than that in Zagreb”.

cultural programmes, and the other which is replete with uncertainties and void of the meaning and prospects of cultural development.

6. Some specific reflections and questions

The following are more specific remarks aimed to move general concerns about decentralisation closer to the methodology of comparison (and co-operation) between the SEE countries.

- Some cultural sectors (e.g., a major number of archives, monuments and, perhaps, museums) cannot be decentralised like other sectors (e.g., libraries, performing arts, publishing), without being seriously damaged in function and efficiency. It might be appropriate then to take this as a general point of departure in classifying categories of cultural goods and activities, i.e., those belonging to the first-order protected by national legislation, those left to liberal market, and those managed by combined national-and-local legislation, whether to protect the heritage of a lesser significance or to support living culture in the terms of new public culture. The research question: how much national legislation clearly differentiates or categorises these cultural values or functions? Also, can first category (nationally protected) be kept open for other candidates who may deserve such a treatment thanks to their future results in domestic or international cultural scene? Besides, may some institutions loose their privileged status due to bad results? If so, how system of evaluation of their work is adapted to meet such dynamics of cultural change?
- Providing that definitions of the objectives of decentralisation are often underdeveloped or are entirely lacking in some cases, how process of decentralisation or its lacking is actually explained? By financial shortages? If so, does it mean that centralised system is less expensive or is it just taken for granted or cannot be questioned at all?
- In the cases where definitions of objectives of decentralisation policy exist, which are these objectives? Can they be recognised in the terms of three dimensions described above? Also, how can these objectives be achieved, by which instruments (legislation, advocacy, lobbying, political campaigns, waiting for new elections, etc.)?
- The following question might be addressed both to research and policy audience: what are the costs and the benefits of central and decentralised systems? Or, can a perpetually centralised system provide different results – like, for example, a better international prestige of the domestic cultural production – or it remains more or less the same regarding the outputs? How this can be explained and justified?
- How much the outlooks of policy decentralisation is determined by the fact that political power in a country is unevenly distributed? Namely, the political system has often two levels, national and regional, which may be presented by two-chambers parliament or simply by uneven distribution of majority votes in cities and municipalities – so that a party or coalition that takes power in national parliament or government must not control some cities or municipal assemblies. As a consequence of that, devolving the competencies in culture down to local levels may sometimes be seen as giving them away into the possession of political adversaries. How far this may condition the agenda as well as the speed of decentralisation or may it be stopped for the sake of preserving the monopoly of power in culture? If so, if check-and-balances may cancel reliability of the process of decentralisation, can it be carried out behind regular political procedure or that the latter delegates its power to autonomous arm's length bodies or professional associations that are supported by third sector in culture?

- In some countries arm's length bodies are established both on national and some local levels (Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia). A number of questions may arise from this experience. For example, do they duplicate the competence of ministry and local administration or they deliver some new qualities and which ones? Do they – or which of them – produce the pattern of “structural centralism”? Are some of them more prone to open the gate to participation in decision making from below, e.g., to NGO-s, cultural amateurs, consumers, public? Most importantly, do their programmes of work essentially differ from the work usually done by non-autonomous bodies or committees of experts within cultural administration? If they do, have new bodies devised their own strategic documents, including the vision of favourable outcomes of decentralisation?
- It seems that a lot of research into the old or new experiences with decentralisation are necessary beforehand for the next policy steps to be introduced. By the old experience we mean the ones where process of decentralisation was stopped or reverted for some reasons. These reasons must carefully be examined and discussed in the light of three-dimensional approach to decentralisation (see sections 2 and 7) before to proceeding with policy recommendations. By the new experiences we mean moving along the scale of decentralisation (see the next section). Do these experiences bring some elements of good practice that may be recommended to other SEE countries? Do such practices pertain a vision of a different public culture (the third dimension of the objectives of decentralisation), or they just keep a balance between state and liberal allocation of cultural goods (for example, although predominantly state governed, has Slovenian cultural policy reached an upper limit of the amount of privatisation in culture, or it considers to move along further decentralisation cum privatisation?)? Under which conditions may good experiences be “transferred” to other places or countries?
- A comparative analysis of the existing features of decentralisation in the SEE countries will be worth to carry out with regard to following questions (provided that answers to at least some of them are given in assessment reports in particular countries profiles, as presented in the *Cultural Policies in Europe – a Compendium of Basic Facts and Trends Policies* (2003, forthcoming):
 - Which competencies in cultural policy (e.g., planning, financing, some forms of regulations or statuses, appointment of directors of cultural institutions, etc.) are allotted to local levels (cities and municipalities) in each of the SEE countries?
 - How different levels of administrative hierarchy are co-ordinated (e.g., in terms of planning, financing, etc.), and what are major problems in such co-ordination?
 - How far different cultural sectors on local levels (e.g., libraries, theatres, galleries, cinemas, publishers...) co-ordinate their programmes and actions and how much they co-operate without mediation or leadership provided by higher or national level?
 - How much cultural sector co-operates with other sectors in local levels? Does higher level or ministry itself encourage such co-operation and which way? Does it give a good example of such practice as far as co-operation of different sectors of government are concerned?
 - How much cultural sector in local levels co-operates with non-governmental organisations in culture, civil society and other sectors (cf. Ilczuk, 2001)? If they co-operate, are their programmes and activities specific to local conditions and cultural needs? Can they be transferred to other communities as well?
 - Which communities (cities, towns, municipalities) are typically less interested in culture or are not interested at all – and why?

- Finally, and this by no means circumscribes the list of possible research questions, it seems that positions for and against (further) decentralisation in policy community, but also in research community, might hypothetically be described as follows:

Against decentralisation – Proponents of centralism and nationalism in culture, who assume that decentralisation is an irrevocably centrifugal process that threatens to return culture to its pre-national segments. Those who are interested in status-quo for pragmatic reasons (e.g., preserving job security in the state sector). Those sceptics, mostly researchers, who do not see a clear and sound end-state of decentralisation nor provision for a higher cultural participation in local level that might be brought by decentralisation.

For decentralisation – Proponents of regionalism, sometimes combined with the interest in cultural or ethnic autonomy (of minorities), still dealing with traditional meaning and functions of culture (representation, identity politics and similar). Proponents of laissez-faire, esp. those interested in buying and selling of public cultural goods or their commercial use (e.g., in cultural and tourist industries). Those interested in creating visions and practices of a new public cultural space, alternative to the old centralist public culture or in creating a mixture of visions and practices that harmonises different interests in favour of decentralisation.

Of course, our preference is for the latter as much as we assume that people in provinces, cultural actors notwithstanding, are more open to new public experience via participation in cultural life, as they are less saturated or “blase” with new experiences. On the other hand, it is a traditional conviction among cultural critics virtually in all Balkan capitals that they see the province as traditional source of cultural distaste, anti-urban bias and even social disruption. This may be true, indeed, but this phenomenon can also be considered as a negative or reactive side of the linearity of the centre-periphery model in culture. Here, we assert that cultural activities are often the only forms of public life of young people in the province, that are concurrent with disco, cafes or roaming in gangs. Last, but not least, provincial places are captured by NGOs activities more than larger cities or metropolitan areas. Actually, but, a great majority of such activities, including those funded by international foundations, are concentrated in the capitals or a few larger cities.

Of course, our methodological interest is realistic and empirical: how far particular positions and interests in decentralisation are strong and under which conditions third dimension of decentralisation process, as mostly preferable, might come to the fore or being harmonised with the second dimension, i.e., balancing state and private or commercial interests in culture? For the beginning, it might be sufficient to make a survey on different features of social, political and organisational cultures of the proponents of centralised and decentralised systems of cultural policy. These features may be examined on the basis of Hofstede’s analytical model (Hofstede, 1994). Accordingly, we may hypothesise as follows:

- a) Proponents of centralism will manifest more of high hierarchical distance (power), collectivism, masculine values (e.g., live to work), anxiety (e.g., xenophobia), and short-term orientation.
- b) Proponents of decentralisation will manifest more of low hierarchy (egalitarianism), individualism, also masculine values (e.g., live to work, primarily because of the job insecurity), relaxed attitudes (e.g., toward the others), and also short-term orientation (again because of job insecurity). However, we may hypothesise that low hierarchy, individualism, feminine values (e.g., work to live), lack of anxiety and long-term orientation will more be found among those interested in the “new public culture” than

among those motivated by considerations of power and prestige of regional or local centres.

This is just an idea for research, which might, perhaps unnecessarily, extend the methodological scope of research. Nevertheless, if such an interest in research exists, we recommend that when applying this analytical model, respondents' preferences regarding centralised/decentralised system should be identified beforehand. This can be done by offering a list of attributes pertained to different modes of centralised and decentralised systems. Or, instead of that, the scale of decentralisation process from 1 to 10, which is presented in the next chapter, may be listed to them for to choose a position or step in the scale which they mostly prefer.

7. Simulating the methodological model: a scale of policy decentralisation

A bunch of reflections and questions about decentralisation have been presented so far without submitting a systematic framework. This concluding section represents a more systematic attempt at understanding different policy rationales staying behind different degrees of centralism, polycentrism and (further) decentralisation, provided that decentralisation must not be a “one-way street”. A cultural policy can move forth and back on a scale of decentralisation, as it used to happen in several countries. Such policy was mainly motivated by power-struggle between different parties in the centre and periphery, although this was rarely explained in such terms, but in terms efficiency, quality, expenditures, local prestige, ethnic identity and autonomy and other legitimate values. Should culture continue to be an instrument of power holders which despise enthusiasts and creative individuals and groups that strive for a different cultural life-world and development? Why would not new democracies join their cultural forces together with international partners (which are supposedly not just a few, but many, esp. in the third sector) in order to establish such a full-fledged objective of decentralisation? Eventually, the world of peace, mutual understanding, solidarity and creativity is not by all means the concern of new democracies only.

In the next a simulation of methodology for research and policy interventions in decentralisation process is demonstrated.⁴ A scale of decentralisation steps or “scenarios” – with three different dimensions (a/, b/ and c/) of the objectives of decentralisation implicated – is presented, moving from 10 (maximal centralism and statism) down to 1 (maximal liberalism). Descriptions of these three dimensions are designated in **bold**. In order to understand the third dimension of cultural policy and cultural functions, the one that deviates from the pendulum moving from state governed toward laissez-faire policies and back, an example of a possible definition of the main strategic goal/s/ of culturally sustainable development is given that pertains such a dimension:

“Developing knowledge and skills that significantly increase interest among the mainstream in quality products of the elite, alternative and traditional or folk culture, and also interest in education and science, which interests at the same time decrease antagonism and increase

⁴ The model is taken from the *Strategy of Cultural Development – Croatia in 21st century* (Cvjeticanin, Katunarić, 2002), and is compiled by the author of this paper from the scale made by Matarasso & Landry (1998) and by Landry (1999) describing strategic dilemmas of cultural policy. Here a third dimension is added, namely possible change of cultural functions approaching to the definition of “culturally sustainable development”, where culture is defined beyond statist and commercial meanings, whereas it pleads for a holistic and interdependent development of economy, political power, cultural creativity and social cohesion across ethnic/national boundaries.

down the scale of decentralisation or to move back, to centralist solution, provided that there would be enough financial funds still remained for such an old solution. If there would be no enough funds, was decentralisation only a “trick” in order to get rid of the “ballast”. Nevertheless, who is really a “ballast” in culture and who is entitled to stay permanently in “marriage” with state? This depends on criteria, of course. But, these should mirror a strategic idea or wisdom of cultural policy. Does it exist or is it just a playground of power-holders? Are they really competent to define what culture of tomorrow would look like and will be used for? Definition of culture seems never be at stake as it is nowadays, for only the “protection of national goods” is a pathetic explanation, as much as “finding alternative source of financing” is hypocritical (who will finance culture for what?).

6 – “Mosaic” or “sustainable decentralisation”. State permits decentralisation, i.e., devolution of its competencies, there where local levels have infrastructure, professional (e.g., arm's length bodies) and financial conditions for decision-making in culture. In other cases, state intervenes (financially and by controlling the work of institutions) in order to protect public cultural goods in those areas. The beginnings of polycentric governance and of entering non-governmental, private or public, foundations, sponsors and other (domestic and international) interested in financing culture, including commercial financing. **This stage may be taken as the point of bifurcation of the objectives of dimension b/ (“balancing burdens”) and of dimension c/ (“new public culture”). Nevertheless, a/ can be reached by combining commercial and public or escapist and educational contents & values of cultural production and services, although this is not something that can be modelled for longer nor the stage 6 alone is permanent. It is rather a dynamic equilibrium of different interests and values. Dimension c/, however, cannot be established in this stage either, but rather (we presume) in the next stage.**

5 - Polycentric governance. Primarily the competencies of cultural planning are allocated to regions and their arm's length bodies, respectively. The state preserves the competence in determining the goals and strategic instruments of cultural development. Non-state sources of financing are growing. **Unlike in the old polycentric systems, regions in the SEE countries may be requested to develop cultural programmes that meet specific demands of regional and local development, let's say, from industry or technology to agriculture or tourism. We recommend this stage as the final point of decentralisation in this case, provided that they incorporate dimension c/ in their strategies and make it, the new public culture, a real focus of endeavour of regions and (many) local units. In other words, cultural policies and cultural products and services in this case will be in a great part idiosyncratic or dissimilar to policies and forms of culture in the capitals and other larger cities, at least those cities in the Western countries who heavily lean on cultural heritages of imperial past and now enjoying “dividends” of that past in the terms of trade or cultural tourism.**⁶

4 - Polycentrism is dismantled at an initial stage. The share of public financing of culture is further reduced and private financing on commercial basis increases. Culture is used as a means of development of other sectors. Standards of public culture becomes less important from local or purely private criteria of defining what is a cultural good. **Dimension a/ is strengthened.**

⁶ This is, in fact, the goal of decentralisation designated in the Croatian strategy of cultural development. Here, of course, it is taken just as an example that simulates a possible design of decentralisation objective(s) in other cases.

3 - Municipalities and cities and private companies or corporations become chief financiers and decision-makers in culture, while central (national) cultural policy protects only a few public cultural goods. **Dimension a/ predominates.**

2 - National level does not co-ordinate decision-making on any level. Instead, arm's length bodies and private organisations co-ordinate decisions on different levels and do so exclusively depending on instantaneous interests or quantities of available financial funds (provided by non-cultural sectors). A minimal standard for definition of public cultural good is respected.

1 - Total decentralisation (financial, administrative, political), de-etatisation and privatisation ("state as facilitator", USA). State is treated equally as private organisations, but it possesses substantially less financial funds. There is no definition of public cultural good that officially matters on the whole territory of the country. Cultural production for commercial markets enjoys absolute primacy.

Concluding questions: Where a particular policy of a SEE country is staying now and where is moving to: 9... 6, 5... 2? Of course, a cultural policy must not follow decentralisation process incrementally, step by step, but may jump over some steps, and also moving back, revising or dismantling previous policy. The most important question, however, is why, what are objectives of such a policy?

8. Summing up the essential ideas

- 8.1 Policy decentralisation is mainly the part of the power game of a variety of collective actors (state, local politics, experts, commercial business). In this paper another objective of decentralisation process is visualised as a possibility, namely the "new public culture".
- 8.2 A three-dimensional approach with regard to different objectives of decentralisation is proposed along with hypotheses which delineate thresholds of decentralisation process in different directions and different forms of cultural policy and cultural activities.
- 8.3 The purpose of the methodological framework is to describe the existing condition of the policy decentralisation in the SEE countries, then preparing the ground for comparative analysis of decentralisation, and, finally, to apply the *Policies for Culture* approach, which is that any major step in decentralisation process that aims at going beyond statist and laissez-fair policies must be a result of co-ordinated efforts of parliament, state administration and, most importantly, third sector domain. The latter may decisively contribute to the new public culture perspective of decentralisation.
- 8.4 Description of cultural policy system in the SEE countries shows that these, except in one case (Romania), stay at the beginning of the process of decentralisation, although with different expectations. Yet, it is not clear what are these expectations or how the objectives of decentralisation are defined.
- 8.5 With regard to the lack of analytical information, some general remarks are given as well as a proposal for research on socio-cultural pattern of different proponents of centralism and decentralisation policies.
- 8.6 Besides, a number of specific questions are formulated that can be answered either by additional search of the existing data and information or by new (empirical) research, that are aimed to analyse comparatively the features of cultural policy systems in the SEE

countries as regards decentralisation, primarily the objectives, instruments and practices of decentralisation.

- 8.7 Finally, a simulated methodological model for research and for policy interventions is given for to detect rationales of the “Titanic”, “balanced burdens” and “new public culture” objectives and instruments of decentralisation. ●

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